

Joseph Smith's Views
ON THE
Powers and Policy
OF THE
Government of the United States

Reprinted from a copy published in
Nauvoo, Ill., in 1844.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH,

1929.

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Powers and Policy

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BORN in a land of liberty, and breathing an air uncorrupted with the sirocco of barbarous climes, I ever feel a double anxiety for the happiness of all men, both in time and in eternity. My cogitations like Daniel's, have for a long time troubled me, when I viewed the condition of men, throughout the world, and more especially in this boasted realm, where the Declaration of Independence "holds these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but at the same time, some two or three millions of people are held as slaves for life, because the spirit in them is covered with a darker skin than ours: and hundreds of our own kindred for an infraction, or supposed infraction of some overwise statute, have to be incarcerated in dungeon glooms, or suffer the more moral penitentiary gravitation of mercy in a nut-shell, while the

duellist, the debauchee, and the defaulter for millions, and other criminals, take the uppermost rooms at feasts, or, like the bird of passage find a more congenial clime by flight.

The wisdom, which ought to characterize the freest, wisest, and most noble nation of the nineteenth century, should, like the sun in his meridian splendor, warm every object beneath its rays: and the main efforts of her officers, who are nothing more or less than the servants of the people, ought to be directed to ameliorate the condition of all: black or white, bond or free; for the best of books says, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

Our common country presents to all men the same advantages; the same facilities; the same prospects; the same honors; and the same rewards: and without hypocrisy, the Constitution when it says, "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America," meant just what it said without reference to color or condition: *ad infinitum*. The aspirations and expectations of a virtuous people, environed with so wise, so liberal, so deep, so broad, and so high a charter of *equal rights*, as appears in said constitution, ought to be treated by those to whom the administration of the laws are intrusted, with as much

sanctity, as the prayers of the saints are treated in heaven, that love, confidence and union, like the sun, moon and stars should bear witness,

Forever singing as they shine,
"The hand that made us is divine !"

Unity is power, and when I reflect on the importance of it to the stability of all governments, I am astounded at the silly moves of persons and parties, to foment discord in order to ride into power on the current of popular excitement; nor am I less surprised at the stretches of power, or restrictions of right, which too often appear as acts of legislators, to pave the way to some favorite political schemes, as destitute of intrinsic merit, as a wolf's heart is of the milk of human kindness: a Frenchman would say, "*presque tout aimer richesses et pouvoir*;" (almost all men like wealth and power).

I must dwell on this subject longer than others, for nearly one hundred years ago that golden patriot, Benjamin Franklin drew up a plan of union for the then colonies of Great Britain that now are such an independent nation, which among many wise provisions for obedient children under their father's more rugged hand, had this: "they have power to make laws, and lay and levy such general duties, imports, or taxes, as to them shall appear most equal and just, (considering the ability and other circumstances of the inhabitants in the several colonies,) and such as may be collected with the least inconvenience to the peo-

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ple; rather discouraging luxury, than loading industry with unnecessary burthens." Great Britain surely lacked the laudable humanity and fostering clemency to grant such a just plan of union—but the sentiment remains like the land that honored its hirth as a pattern for wise men to *study the convenience of the people more than the comfort of the cabinet.*

And one of the most noble fathers of our freedom and country's glory: great in war, great in peace, great in the estimation of the world, and great in the hearts of his countrymen, the illustrious Washington, said in his first inaugural address to Congress: "I behold the surest pledges that as, on one side, no local prejudices or attachments, no separate views or party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interest, so, on another, that the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality, and the preeminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens, and command the respect of the world." Verily, here shines the virtue and wisdom of a statesman in such lucid rays that had every succeeding Congress followed the rich instruction, in all their deliberations and enactments, for the benefit and convenience of the whole community and the communities of which it is composed, no sound of a rebellion in South Carolina; no rapture in Rhode Island; no mob in

Missouri,expelling her citizens by executive authority; corruption in the ballot boxes; a horrid warfare between Ohio and Michigan; hard times and distress; outbreak upon outbreak in the principal cities; murder, robbery, and defalcations, scarcity of money, and a thousand other difficulties, would have torn asunder the bonds of the union; destroyed the confidence of man, and left the great body of the people to mourn over misfortunes in poverty, brought on by corrupt legislation in an hour of proud vanity, for self-aggrandizement. The great Washington, soon after the foregoing faithful admonition for the common welfare of his nation, further advised Congress that "among the many interesting objects which will engage your attention, that of providing for the common defence will merit particular regard. To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace." As the Italian would say: *Buono aviso*, (good advice)

The elder Adams in his inaugural address, gives national pride such a grand turn of justification, that every honest citizen must look back upon the infancy of the United States with an approving smile and rejoice, that patriotism in the rulers, virtue in the people, and prosperity in the union, once crowned the expectations of hope; unveiled the sophistry of the hypocrite and silenced the folly of foes: Mr. Adams said, "If national pride is ever justifiable, or excusable, it is when it springs not from *power* or riches, grandeur or glory, but from conviction of national innocence,

information and benevolence." There is no doubt such was actually the case with our young realm at the close of the last century; peace, prosperity and union filled the country with religious toleration, temporal enjoyment and virtuous enterprise; and grandly, too, when the deadly winter of the "Stamp Act," the "Tea Act," and other *close communion* acts of royalty had choked the growth of freedom of speech, liberty of the press, and liberty of conscience, did light, liberty and loyalty flourish like the cedars of God.

The respected and venerable Thomas Jefferson, in his inaugural address made more than forty years ago, shows what a beautiful prospect an innocent, virtuous nation presents to the sage's eye, where there is space for enterprise: hands for industry; heads for heroes, and hearts for moral greatness. He said: "A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye; when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, and humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking." Such a prospect was truly soul stirring to a good man, but "since the fathers have fallen asleep," wicked and designing men have unrobed the government of its glory, and the people, if not in dust and

ashes, or in sack cloth, have to lament in poverty, her departed greatness: while demagogues build fires in the north and south, east and west, to keep up their spirits *till it is better times*: but year after year has left the people to *hope* till the very name of *Congress* or *State Legislature* is as horrible to the sensitive friend of his country, as the house of "Blue Beard" is to children, or "Crockett's" Hell of London, to meek men. When the people are secure and their rights properly respected, then the four main pillars of prosperity, viz: agriculture, manufactures, navigation and commerce, need the fostering care of government: and in so goodly a country as ours, where the soil, the climate, the rivers, the lakes, and the sea coast; the productions, the timber, the minerals, and the inhabitants are so diversified, that a pleasing variety accommodates all tastes. trades and calculations, it certainly is the highest point of supervision to protect the whole northern and southern, eastern and western, center and circumference of the realm, by a judicious tariff. It is an old saying and a true one, "if you wish to be respected, respect yourselves."

I will adopt in part the language of Mr. Madison's inaugural address: "To cherish peace and friendly intercourse with all nations, having correspondent dispositions; to maintain sincere neutrality towards belligerent nations; to prefer in all cases amicable discussion and reasonable accommodation of differences to a decision of them by an appeal to arms; to exclude for-

eign intrigues and foreign partialities, so degrading to all countries, and so baneful to free ones; to foster a spirit of independence too just to invade the rights of others; too proud to surrender our own, too liberal to indulge unworthy prejudices ourselves, and too elevated not to look down upon them in others; to hold the union of the States as the basis of their peace and happiness; to support the Constitution, which is the cement of the union as well as in its limitations as in its authorities; to respect the rights and authorities reserved to the states and to the people, as equally incorporated with, and essential to the success, of the general system; to avoid the slightest interference with the rights of conscience, or the functions of religion, so wisely exempted from civil jurisdiction; to preserve in their full energy, the other salutary provisions in behalf of private and personal rights, and of the freedom of the press;" as far as intention aids in the fulfilment of duty, are consummations too big with benefits not to captivate the energies of all honest men to achieve them, when they can be brought to pass by reciprocation, friendly alliances, wise legislation, and honorable treaties.

The government has once flourished under the guidance of trusty servants; and the Hon. Mr. Monroe in his day, while speaking of the Constitution, says: "Our commerce has been wisely regulated with foreign nations, and between the states; new states have been admitted into our union; our territory has been enlarged by fair

and honorable treaty and with great advantage to the original states; the states respectively protected by the national government, under a mild paternal system against foreign dangers, and enjoying within their separate spheres, by a wise partition of power, a just proportion of the sovereignty, have improved their police, extended their settlements, and attained a strength and maturity which are the best proofs of wholesome law well administered. And if we look to the condition of individuals, what a proud spectacle does it exhibit! Who has been deprived of any right of person and property? Who restrained from offering his vows in the mode he prefers, to the Divine author of his being? It is well known that all these blessings have been enjoyed in their fullest extent: and I add, with peculiar satisfaction, that there has been no example of a capital punishment being inflicted on any one for the crime of high treason." What a delightful picture of power, policy and prosperity! Truly the wise man's proverb is just: "Sedaukauh teromain goy, veh-ka-sade le-u-meem khahmaut." Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

But this is not all. The same honorable statesman, after having had about forty years experience in the government, under the full tide of successful experiment, gives the following commendatory assurance of the efficiency of the *magna charta* to answer its great end and aim: *To protect the people in their rights.* "Such, then, is the happy government under which we live; a govern-

ment adequate to every purpose for which the social compact is formed; a government elective in all its branches, under which every citizen may, by his merit, obtain the highest trust recognized by the constitution; which contains within it no cause of discord; none to put at variance one portion of the community with another; a government which protects every citizen in the full enjoyment of his rights, and is able to protect the nation against injustice from foreign powers."

Again, the younger Adams in the silver age of our country's advancement to fame, in his inaugural address, (1825) thus candidly declares the majesty of the youthful republic, in its increasing greatness: "The year of jubilee since the first formation of our union has just elapsed—that of the Declaration of Independence is at hand. The consummation of both was effected by this constitution. Since that period a population of four millions has multiplied to twelve. A territory, bounded by the Mississippi, has been extended from sea to sea. New states have been admitted to the union, in numbers nearly equal to those of the first confederation. Treaties of peace, amity and commerce, have been concluded with the principal dominions of the earth. The people of other nations, the inhabitants of regions acquired, not by conquest, but by compact, have been united with us in the participation of our rights and duties, of our burdens and blessings. The forest has fallen by the ax of our woodsmen; the soil has been made to teem by the tillage of our farmers: our com-

merce has whitened every ocean. The dominion of man over physical nature has been extended by the invention of our artists. Liberty and law have walked hand in hand. All the purposes of human association have been accomplished as effectively as under any other government on the globe, and at a cost little exceeding, in a whole generation, the expenditures of other nations in a single year."

In continuation of such noble sentiments, General Jackson, upon his ascension to the great chair of the chief magistracy, said: "As long as our government is administered for the good of the people, and is regulated by their will; as long as it secures to us the rights of person and property, liberty of conscience, and of the press, it will be worth defending; and so long as it is worth defending, a patriotic militia will cover it with an impenetrable ægis."

General Jackson's administration may be denominated the *acme* of American glory, liberty and prosperity, for the national debt, which in 1815, on account of the late war, was \$125,000,000, and lessened gradually, was paid up in his golden day; and preparations were made to distribute the surplus revenue among the several states: and that august patriot, to use his own words in his farewell address, retired leaving "a great people prosperous and happy, in the full enjoyment of liberty and peace, honored and respected by every nation of the world."

At the age, then, of sixty² years, our blooming

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republic began to decline under the withering touch of Martin Van Buren! Disappointed ambition; thirst for power, pride, corruption, party spirit, faction, patronage, perquisites, fame, tangling alliances; priest-craft and spiritual wickedness in *high places*, struck hands, and revelled in midnight splendor. Trouble, vexation, perplexity and contention, mingled with hope, fear and murmuring, rumbled through the union and agitated the whole nation as would an earthquake at the center of the earth the world, heaving the sea beyond its bounds, and shaking the everlasting hills: So, in hopes of better times, while jealousy, hypocritical pretensions, and pompous ambition, were luxuriating on the ill-gotten spoils of the people, they rose in their majesty like a tornado, and swept through the land, till General Harrison appeared, as a star among the storm clouds, for better weather.

The calm came; and the language of that venerable patriot, in his inaugural address, while descanting upon the merits of the Constitution and its framers, thus expressed himself: "There were in it, features which appeared not to be in harmony with their ideas of a simple representative democracy or republic. And knowing the tendency of power to increase itself, particularly when executed by a single individual, predictions were made that, at no very remote period, the government would terminate in virtual monarchy. It would not become me to say that the fears of these patriots have been already realized. But as I sincerely believe that the tendency of measures

and of men's opinions, for some years past, has been in that direction, it is, I conceive, strictly proper that I should take this occasion to repeat the assurances I have heretofore given, of my determination to arrest the progress of that tendency if it really exists, and restore the government to its pristine health and vigor." This good man died before he had the opportunity of applying one balm to ease the pain of our groaning country, and I am willing the nation should be the judge, whether General Harrison, in his exalted station, upon the eve of his entrance into the world of spirits, *told the truth or not*; with acting President Tyler's three years of perplexity and pseudo whig democrat reign, to heal the breaches, or show the wounds, *secundum artum*, (according to art). Subsequent events, all things considered, Van Buren's downfall, Harrison's exit, and Tyler's self-sufficient turn to the whole, go to show as a Chaldean might exclaim. *Beram etai elaub besh-mayauh ganhah ranzeen*: (Certainly there is a God in Heaven to reveal secrets).

No honest man can doubt for a moment, but the glory of American liberty is on the wane; and that calamity and confusion will sooner or later destroy the peace of the people. Speculators will urge a national bank as a savior of credit and comfort. A hireling pseudo priesthood will plausibly push abolition doctrines and doings, and "human rights," into Congress and into every other place where conquest smells of fame, or opposition swells to popularity. Democracy, Whiggery, and

cliquery, will attract their elements and foment divisions among the people, to accomplish fancied schemes and accumulate power, while poverty driven to despair, like hunger forcing its way through a wall, will break through the statutes of men, to save life, and mend the breach in prison glooms. A still higher grade, of what the "nobility of the nations" call "great men," will dally with all rights in order to smuggle a fortune at "one fell swoop;" mortgage Texas, possess Oregon, and claim all the unsettled regions of the world for hunting and trapping: and should a humble honest man, red, black, or white, exhibit a better title, these gentry have only to clothe the judge with richer ermine, and spangle the lawyer's fingers with finer rings, to have the judgment of his peers, and the honor of his lords, as a pattern of honesty, virtue and humanity, while the motto hangs on his nation's escutcheon. *"Every man has his price!"*

Now, oh! people! people! turn unto the Lord and live; and reform this nation. Frustrate the designs of wicked men. Reduce Congress at least one half. Two Senators from a state and two members to a million of population, will do more business than the army that now occupy the halls of the National Legislature. Pay them two dollars and their board per diem; (except Sundays,) that is more than the farmer gets, and he lives honestly. Curtail the offices of government in pay, number and power, for the Philistine lords have shorn our nation of its goodly locks in the lap of Delilah.

Petition your state legislatures to pardon every convict in their several penitentiaries: blessing them as they go, and saying to them in the name of the Lord, *go thy way and sin no more*. Advise your legislators when they make laws for larceny, burglary or any felony, to make the penalty applicable to work upon roads, public works, or any place where the culprit can be taught more wisdom and more virtue; and become more enlightened. Rigor and seclusion will never do as much to reform the propensities of man, as reason and friendship. Murder only can claim confinement or death. Let the penitentiaries be turned into seminaries of learning, where intelligence, like the angels of heaven, would banish such fragments of barbarism: Imprisonment for debt is a meaner practice than the savage tolerates with all his ferocity; "*Amor vincit omnia.*" Love conquers all.

Petition also, ye goodly inhabitants of the slave states, your legislators to abolish slavery by the year 1850, or now, and save the abolitionist from reproach and ruin, infamy and shame. Pray Congress to pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands, and from the deduction of pay from the members of Congress. Break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire him to labor like other human beings; for "an hour of virtuous liberty on earth, is worth a whole eternity of bondage!" Abolish the practice in the army and navy of trying men by court martial for desertion; if a soldier or marine runs away, send him

his wages, with this instruction, that *his country will never trust him again, he has forfeited his honor*. Make HONOR the standard with all men: be sure that good is rendered for evil in all cases: and the whole nation, like a kingdom of kings and priests, will rise up in righteousness: and be respected as wise and worthy on earth, and as just and holy for heaven, by Jehovah the author of perfection. More economy in the national and state governments, would make less taxes among the people, more equality through the cities, towns and country, would make less distinction among the people; and more honesty and familiarity in societies, would make less hypocrisy and flattery in all branches of community; and open, frank, candid, decorum to all men, in this boasted land of liberty, would heget esteem, confidence, union and love; and the neighbor from any state, or from any country, of whatever color, clime or tongue, could rejoice when he puts his foot on the sacred soil of freedom, and exclaim: the very name of "*American*," is fraught with *friendship*! Oh! then create confidence! restore freedom!—break down slavery! banish imprisonment for debt, and be in love, fellowship and peace with all the world! Remember that honesty is not subject to law: the law was made for transgressors: wherefore a Dutchman might exclaim: *Ein ehrlicher name ist besser als Reichthum*, (a good name is better than riches.)

For the accommodation of the people in every state and territory, let Congress shew their wisdom by granting a national bank, with branches

in each state and territory, where the capital stock shall be held by the nation for the mother bank: and by the states and territories, for the branches: and whose officers and directors shall be elected yearly by the people, with wages at the rate of two dollars per day for services: which several banks shall never issue any more bills than the amount of capital stock in her vaults and the interest. The nett gain of the mother bank shall be applied to the national revenue, and that of the branches to the states and territories' revenues. And the bills shall be par throughout the nation, which will mercifully cure that fatal disorder known in cities, as *brokerage*; and leave the people's money in their own pockets.

Give every man his constitutional freedom, and the president full power to send an army to suppress mobs; and the states authority to repeal and impugn that relic of folly, which makes it necessary for the governor of a state to make the demand of the president for troops, in cases of invasion or rebellion. The governor himself may be a mobber and, instead of being punished, as he should be for murder and treason, he may destroy the very lives, rights, and property he should protect.

Like the good Samaritan, send every lawyer, as soon as he repents and obeys the ordinances of heaven, to preach the gospel to the destitute, without purse or scrip, pouring in the oil and the wine: a learned priesthood is certainly more honorable than an "*hiredling clergy*."

As to the contiguous territories to the United States, wisdom would direct no tangling alliance: Oregon belongs to this government honorably, and when we have the red man's consent, let the union spread from the east to the west sea; and if Texas petitions Congress to be adopted among the sons of liberty, give her the right hand of fellowship; and refuse not the same friendly grip to Canada and Mexico: and when the right arm of freemen is stretched out in the character of a navy, for the protection of rights, commerce and honor, let the iron eyes of power, watch from Maine to Mexico, and from California to Columbia; thus may union be strengthened, and foreign speculation prevented from opposing broadside to broadside.

Seventy years have done much for this goodly land; they have hurst the chains of oppression and monarchy; and multiplied its inhabitants from two to twenty millions; with a proportionate share of knowledge: keen enough to circumnavigate the globe; draw the lightning from the clouds; and cope with all the crowned heads of the world.

Then why, oh, why! will a once flourishing people not arise, phenix like, over the cinders of Martin Van Buren's power; and over the sinking fragments and smoking ruins of other catamount politicians; and over the windfalls of Benton, Calhoun, Clay, Wright, and a caravan of other equally unfortunate law doctors, and cheerfully help to spread a plaster and hind up the *burat*,

bleeding wounds of a sore but blessed country? The southern people are hospitable and noble: they will help to rid so free a country of every vestige of slavery, whenever they are assured of an equivalent for their property. The country will be full of money and confidence, when a national bank of twenty millions, and a state bank in every state, with a million or more, gives a tone to monetary matters, and make a circulating medium as valuable in the purses of a whole community, as in the coffers of a speculating hanker or broker.

The people may have faults but they never should be trifled with. I think Mr. Pitt's quotation in the British Parliament of Mr. Prior's couplet for the husband and wife, to apply to the course which the king and ministry of England should pursue to the then colonies, of the now United States, might be a genuine rule of action for some of the *breath-made* men in high places, to use towards the posterity of that noble daring people:

"Be to her faults a little blind;
Be to her virtues very kind."

We have had Democratic presidents; Whig presidents; a pseudo Democratic-Whig president; and now it is time to have a *President of the United States*; and let the people of the whole union, like the inflexible Romans, whenever they find a *promise* made by a candidate, that is not *practised* as an officer, hurl the miserable sycop-

phant from his exaltation, as God did Nehuchadnezzar, to crop the grass of the field, with a beast's heart among the cattle.

Mr. Van Buren said in his inaugural address, that he went "into the presidential chair the inflexible and uncompromising opponent of every attempt on the part of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, against the wishes of the slave holding states; and also with a determination equally decided to resist the slightest interference with it in the states where it exists." Poor little Matty made this rhapsodical sweep with the fact before his eyes, that the state of New York, his native state, had abolished slavery, without a struggle or a groan. Great God! how independent! From henceforth slavery is tolerated where it exists: constitution or no constitution; people or no people; right or wrong; vox Matti, vox Diaholi: "the voice of Matty, the voice of the devil;" and peradventure, his great "Sub-Treasury" scheme was a piece of the same mind. But the man and his measures have such a striking resemblance to the anecdote of the Welshman and his cart-tongue, that, when the constitution was so long that it allowed slavery at the capitol of a free people, it could not be cut off: but when it was so short that it needed a *Sub-Treasury*, to save the funds of the nation, it *could be spliced*! Oh, granny, granny, what a long tail our puss has got! As a Greek might say, *hysteron proteron*: the cart before the horse: hut his mighty whisk through the great national fire, for the presidential chest-

nuts, burnt the locks of his glory with the blaze of his folly!

In the United States the people are the government; and their united voice is the only sovereign that should rule; the only power that should be obeyed; and the only gentlemen that should be honored, at home and abroad, on the land and on the sea. Wherefore, were I the President of the United States, by the voice of a virtuous people, I would honor the old paths of the venerated fathers of freedom: I would walk in the tracks of the illustrious patriots, who carried the ark of the government upon their shoulders with an eyesingle to the glory of the people, and when that people petitioned to abolish slavery in the slave states, I would use all honorable means to have their prayers granted: and give liberty to the captive, by paying the southern gentleman a reasonable equivalent for his property, that the whole nation might be free indeed! When the people petitioned for a national bank, I would use my best endeavors to have their prayers answered, and establish one on national principles to save taxes, and make them the controllers of its ways and means. And when the people petitioned to possess the territory of Oregon or any other contiguous territory, I would lend the influence of a chief magistrate to grant so reasonable a request, that they might extend the mighty efforts and enterprise of a free people from the east to the west sea; and make the wilderness blossom as the rose. And when a neighboring realm petitioned to join

the union of the sons of liberty, my voice would be, *Come: yea come Texas; come Mexico; come Canada; and come all the world*—let us be brethren: let us be one great family; and let there be universal peace. Abolish the cruel custom of prisons (except certain cases), penitentiaries, and court-martials for desertion; and let reason and friendship reign over the ruins of ignorance and barbarity; yea, I would, as the universal friend of man, open the prisons; open the eyes, open the ears and open the hearts of all people, to behold and enjoy freedom, unadulterated freedom: and God, who once cleansed the violence of the earth with a flood; whose Son laid down His life for the salvation of all His Father gave Him out of the world; and who has promised that He will come and purify the world again with fire in the last days, should be supplicated by me for the good of all people.

With the highest esteem, I am,

A friend of virtue and of the people,

JOSEPH SMITH.

Nauvoo, Ill., Feb. 7, 1844.

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